



CONFERENCE OF INGOs CONF/AG(2022)SYN1

CONFERENCE OF THE OING CONF/AG(2022)OJ2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING (GA)

Draft agenda

Tuesday 5 April 2022

09:30 - 13:00

14:30 - 16:15

Hybrid meeting (Room Palais 9 & Kudo)
English/French interpretation provided

Morning session (09:30 - 13:00)

09:30 - Opening of the meeting by CINGO President Gerhard Ermischer (GE)

Appointment of the rapporteurs of the meeting

- Geneviève Laloy -in French
- Ruth Allen – in English

Draft agenda - for adoption

Query: Gilbert Flam (GF) noted non-inclusion of statement on Ukraine. GE explained not included according to GA rules because from one INGO (not committee). Substantive issues are on the agenda.

Adoption of Agenda: votes online 43 yes, 4 no, 1 abstention. Passed in the room. Agenda adopted.

09:45 Introduction and activity report of the CINGO President Gerhard Ermischer (GE) and the Standing Committee

GE Welcomed members back to Strasbourg in person and online. Introduced current context – dominance on the agenda of the invasion of Ukraine and implications for democracy, human rights, and rule of law. However, other key matters will be reported and discussed in the Assembly sessions.

One minute's silence in honour of the victims of the war in Ukraine

Presentation from representatives of Ukraine in the Palais

Reflected on terrible experiences for the Ukraine population. Thanked INGOs helping on the ground, monitoring the war and gathering information on rights violations/war crimes. INGOs will be needed for the future, to assist on the ground, communicate the reality of the war and counter propaganda.

Applause

10:00 Daniel Popescu (DP), Head of the Democratic Institutions and Governance Department, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe

Welcomed alignment of CINGO with CoE Priorities: More alignment of CINGO work programme with priorities of the Committee of Ministers can increase recognition and influence of CINGO in CoE. The Expert Council in NGO law is highly valued. Country visits have been curtailed but will start soon.

CoE priorities include civil society: The CoE Strategic Framework presented to Committee of Ministers includes protection of human rights defenders and promotion of role of civil society. The decline in democracy in many countries is recognised and worrying, Dialogue with civil society is important – genuine desire to engage citizen voices. Key meetings in June with Committee of Ministers and in World Forum on Democracy in November.

Exclusion of Russia from CoE and consequences: Exclusion of Russia means exclusion from the conventions of CoE including European Convention on Human Rights. Right of Russians to raise complaints to European Court of Human Rights ends in September 2022. There are 18,000 outstanding complaints from Russian citizens or related to Russia. The Court aims to ensure follow-up of existing complaints. Financial implications of expulsion of Russia for CoE are not yet known.

CINGO President's (GE) General Update :

GE gave a brief overview of important actions by CINGO on matters other than Ukraine since the last General Assembly.

CINGO intervention in Poland on 'Lex Czarnek': proposed repressive law in respect of LGBTQ+ rights, school curricula and role of NGOs in schools. On 2 March, the government decided not to pass this. CINGO congratulated for influence in this and remains vigilant to the law being brought back.

CINGO involvement in revision of the Social Charter: to be reported in Day Two session

Rise of authoritarianism and anti-democratic forces: A trend across many nations of Europe. GE spoke in Committee of Ministers on need for CoE to be more proactive in upholding democracy, social rights and cohesion. NGOs have key role in tackling social fractures through civil society.

Questions from the floor:

Two questions on CINGO position support for Russian citizens: need for solidarity with Russians supporting democracy and ongoing links with culture and education colleagues in Russia.

GE responded and confirmed CINGO solidarity with the Russian people supporting democracy and human rights, drawing attention to relevant items on the agenda. DP confirmed the 21 April 2022 rapporteurs' group will discuss relations with Russian civilians & INGOs.

10:30 How to ensure respect for economic and social rights in times of war and of declining multilateralism: - debate organised by the Conference of INGOs' Action for Social Rights Committee:

Introduction by Karin Lukas - President of the European Committee of Social Rights

Anna Rurka (AR) – CINGO Standing Committee and past President: The war in Ukraine presents huge social, economic and trauma challenges. Social rights and welfare for migrants in receiving countries

need to be embedded. Humanitarian aid is necessary but not enough. Those helping Ukrainians also need support to avoid burn-out. CINGO President and Standing Committee are committed to building solidarity amongst NGOs and support on the ground in Ukraine and in receiving countries.

Iryna Maievska Caritas Ukraine: reported on humanitarian work in Ukraine, screening for health and care needs and supporting displaced and war-affected adults and children. Receiving nations need to ensure Ukrainians can access services and are prepared and supported for return when possible.

Anna Wszelaczynska (Past President of Soroptomist International) – Poland. Poland has a severe shortage of housing, but millions have taken refugees into own homes. There is overcrowding/little long-term housing. Poland is a homogenous society, but many Ukrainians have similar culture so are more accepted than other migrant groups and may wish to stay.

Ludmila – Ukrainian association of solidarity: Noted risks to women and children becoming victims of trafficking and abuse. There is no list of those leaving and a real risk of children going missing.

Discussion with members

NGOs have key role in disseminating relevant information to Ukrainian refugees (e.g. on safety, services) in receiving countries; continuing issue of readiness/sufficiency of the social systems in receiving countries to respond Ukrainian people; NGOs have key role in fostering solidarity, mutual aid and empowering self-help within communities, often ahead of government authorities; importance of supporting Ukrainian government and authorities/services to be resilient during and after the war and looking to rebuilding; importance of ‘helping the helpers’ throughout.

[Report of the Committee Action for Social Rights of the Conference of INGOs](#) followed by a debate on current issues

Key activities and discussion included: organisation of webinars March and June 2022. Update on Social Rights Tracker online. Involvement of civil society in reform of the Social Charter. Noted 18th October 2021 event on international day for eradication of poverty in Strasbourg and via webinar (*similar event to take place on 17 October 2022*).

CINGO President (GE): Overview of process of removal of Russia from Council of Europe:

Under para 8 of CoE statutes, Russia was deemed to have violated values of CoE, and suspended from Committee of Ministers and PACE. It was also no longer on intergovernmental steering committees. In article 8 of CoE statutes, when a country is sanctioned, it is expected the country will resign and withdraw from CoE. This did not happen. Committee of Ministers could then decide to remove Russia and did so with no objections.

Implications for CINGO: As a conference of international organisations, we have no national members. If INGO has membership in Russia and falls below the 5-country membership requirement of CINGO, we can find another INGO to enable it to continue membership. If an organisation has its legal seat in Russia this is not necessarily a problem as legal seat of our INGOs can be anywhere.

Where human rights Russian based organisations are dissolved in Russian courts (e.g., Memorial International) they will need to find a new legal home, even where CINGO does not recognise the legal process. They can be registered in different CoE countries or may be established in a new or existing umbrella INGO.

CINGO supports improvements in humanitarian visa schemes for Russian human rights defenders and their families needing to leave Russia. Only Netherlands and Norway issuing at the moment and process is difficult. Asking member states of CoE to help with this.

12:00 Presentation of ‘The Campaign to Uphold Rights in Europe’ (CURE): a campaign to build the effectiveness of the CoE

Nela Larysova, head of the CURE Campaign – Russia – Introduced CURE’s four priorities:

- Strengthen the European Convention on Human Rights and its system.
- Follow up actions on resolutions and reports of the CoE with the participation of civil society.
- Widen civil society participation
- Wish to include civil society and also universities and researchers

Harry Hummel: from Netherlands Helsinki Committee. Spoke on working with democratic sectors of society in Russia and Belarus, promoting rights and helping foster long term democracy in Russia.

Anna Maralyan, Deputy Director, International Protection Centre: spoke on importance of future ways to ensure Russia upholds human rights now outside Council of Europe and its conventions.

Yuri Dzhibladze, member of the CURE campaign team: spoke on recognising Russian citizens and NGOs that are against the war and support human rights. Many are leaving Russia. Many need support for speaking out and protesting in Russia.

End of morning session. Break 13.00 – 14.30

14:30 [Presentation of the Committee on the Rights of Migrants](#) on the current situation (in French only):

Intervention by Andriy Sadovyi, Mayor of Lviv, Ukraine - with translation into Ukrainian

Spoke of honoured to be present and the tragedy of the war in which entire cities have disappeared. Today Lviv hosts more than 200,000 internally displaced people. Expressed wish that the EU institutions have courage to take a stand.

Daniel Guery, Chair of the CINGO Committee on the Rights of Migrants: The committee stands in solidarity with Ukraine and the surrounding countries. The committee continues to support other priority concerns in respect of migrants and refugees in Europe including those who are otherwise victims of ‘Push-Back’ and those crossing the Mediterranean. The committee is committed to CINGO working in close cooperation with all parts of CoE.

Leyla Kayacik, Special Rapporteur of the Secretary General on Migration Noted the excellent cooperation with the CINGO Migration Committee – an essential partner. We must not forget other refugees in Europe from other disaster areas while responding to Ukraine crisis.

The Special Rapporteur function was created in 2016 following the Syrian crisis. It has established coordination with other bodies: UNICEF, EU, Afra and others, and monitors refugee issues from

human rights perspective. It focused first action plan on child migrants and second on vulnerable people. It promotes good practices for inclusion and rights of migrants and adapted its plans to respond to Ukraine. Other current concerns include criminalisation in some countries of NGOs working to protect migrants' rights. NGOs are vital to turn the work of the Special Rapporteur and CoE into tangible reality.

Tatiana Termacic, Head of the Secretariat of the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons spoke about the vital role of (I)NGOs and allyship with her work. (I)NGOs play a key role on the ground and as watchdogs. She stated there is no such thing as illegal migration, but there may be conflicts at the legal level in countries. She asked for that a list of INGOs working on the integration of refugees and identification of missing persons be drawn up.

Discussion with members: The two-speed system for migrants was noted i.e., harder for Syrian and Afghan refugees than Ukrainians. Need to evolve more equitable pathways for all refugees.

Civil society representatives from Ukraine: Representatives of the Civil Society of Ukraine and intervention of Andriy Sadovyi, Mayor of Lviv, Ukraine - with translation into Ukrainian

Introduced by Beata Zwierzynska, CINGO Standing Committee

The Assembly heard experiences and testimony from Ukrainian speakers within Ukraine and in Poland.

Olga - Researcher in the criminal field. Works at the Ministry of Science and Education, Kyiv spoke of the many victims of war. 40% of her students have been affected, many killed, displaced or missing. Alexander – Researcher in polytechnic, Lviv offering a support zone for people fleeing the war frontlines. University helps displaced students and academics - needs more help from outside Ukr. Anna - Ukrainian refugee. She fled her city with her son and mother and tells us of her journey to Poland and the trauma of war. Emphasises importance of sanctions to help end the conflict.

Discussion with members: Importance of medical and legal INGOs noted; support needed for LGBTQ+ refugees and working with needs of migrants at local, community level. The plight of children is a major concern, many being separated from one or both parents; risk of trafficking and exploitation of children and women. Importance of support for volunteers, helping professionals and activists in civil society. View from Belarussian member of need to fight Russian propaganda and to consider how to support rebuilding of Ukraine. We must harness what INGOs can do for Ukrainian situation and not forget this applies to all refugees and migrants.

16.15 End of the meeting of the first day of the General Assembly